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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, May 30, 1935

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "HOME TUMBLE HAZARDS." Information approved by the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

--ooOoo--

At one time or another, you and I have had a good deal to say about improving our homes. We've talked about fixing up this room or that to make it more attractive or convenient or comfortable. But all this time we've neglected discussing a most important way of bettering our living place. We haven't said much about making our homes safe.

I know. That does sound like an unnecessary topic of conversation. We've grown up since babyhood with the idea of home as the place of safety. "Safe at home" is a common phrase in our language. But it's a mistaken phrase these days. Home sweet home begins to appear as one of the most dangerous spots on earth. That's what recent figures on accidents show -- figures collected by the National Safety Council and various life insurance companies.

Recently a large life insurance company finished a study of 117,000 accidents with the statement that the risk from injury at home is "almost seven times as great when riding on buses, surface cars, taxicabs, boats, airplanes and other public conveyances." Considering fatal accidents alone, the National Safety Council reports that automobile accidents each year kill only five percent more people than home accidents. In fact, in some cities the automobile ranks second to the domestic accident in fatalities.

As for home accidents which did not result in death, one report says that during the past year they cost 4,230,000 people a total of \$630,000,000. That figure covers lost wages, medical care, and related expenses.

Well, when you read cold-blooded figures like this, you begin to wonder what's to be done. Accidents don't just happen. They're not so much the work of an unkind fate. Carelessness, neglect, and unawareness -- these are largely responsible for our appalling record of home accidents. Rearranging your home for safety rarely needs to be an expensive job. It generally requires an outlay of thought rather than money.

Well, let's look around the house, either yours or mine, and see where dangers may be lying in wait for us -- dangers that are so familiar that we never have recognized them as such. The figures show that almost half of the most serious home accidents come from falls. Let's see what might cause people to trip, slip, or tumble around the house.

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Rugs are one of the chief hazards. Rugs may look harmless, but actually they cause many times more deaths than electricity in the home does. So watch your rugs. Repair all worn spots that might catch heels, and fasten down all curling corners that might trip someone. Rugs on slippery floors need some sort of a device underneath to prevent them from sliding. A friend of mine makes her own rubber non-slip corners for rugs. She cuts them from old inner tubes and sews them on the underside of the rug.

Stairs are another cause of many falls. And the rug menace extends to the stairs. So be careful to mend any slight holes as they appear on stair carpets, and to tack down any loose edges. When a stair board comes loose or a tread underneath seems wobbly, you'll be wise to call the carpenter. Outdoors in winter icy steps are hazardous. Keep a box of sand on the porch to sprinkle on when needed.

And right here we should mention poor light, especially on stairways, as a cause of bad falls. Dark cellar stairs and porch steps -- these are responsible for many broken bones. One good safety measure is to paint the bottom step of your cellar stairs white so you can see it more easily. And if you haven't proper lighting at the top and bottom of the stairs, keep a flashlight handy to light your way. Stairs are a special hazard when small children are in the home. So make them safe by a sturdy gate at the top -- a gate with a lock youngsters can't unfasten.

Tumbles from windows. They happen every year along about this time in homes when there are small children and unsufficient screens. Window screens not only protect the family from flies and mosquitoes but also from falls.

Misplaced articles -- there's another hazard that many people never think about. Playthings left on the floor to stumble over; utensils like brooms and mops and vacuum cleaners standing about; and articles left on the stairs to be carried up or down -- these plus poor light make a perfect setting for a bad fall. Orderliness, you see, aids safety as well as appearances.

The fifth hazard that needs mention in connection with falls is the bathtub. Some 12,000 people suffer injuries every year from slipping in the bath and many of them result in death. To make your bathtub safe, you need a firm wooden hand rail fastened at one side. I mention wood for the rail because it won't be as slippery as some other materials even to a wet soapy hand that clutches it in a hurry. A rubber vacuum mat in the bottom of the tub is also a protection against slipping.

And while we're mentioning home falls, we certainly should take up the matter of dangerous habits of housewives. Think of all the women you and I know who climb up on teetering chairs or sliding boxes or tippy tables to reach a high shelf. This careless habit causes many injuries every year. People who have been studying the cost of accidents say that tumbles from this cause average three hundred and three dollars apiece in doctor bills and so on. So don't take a chance on a chair. It's likely to slip out from under any time. If you're going to climb, depend on a firm stepladder. Every kitchen needs one.

Some day soon I'll pass along to you some news about making your kitchen safe -- a few ways you can prevent painful and expensive kitchen accidents. Just now, though, we have only about time to review the list of home tumble hazards. They are: rugs--torn, curling or sliding rugs; stairs, lack of light, especially on stairs; unscreened windows (for small children); misplaced articles; bathtubs; and teetering objects used in place of a firm stepladder.

